

Parking gets tougher:
Authority to crack
down on dangerous
violations. **B4.**

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22, 2007

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The Philadelphia Inquirer

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TODD VACHON

Frank Baseman's poster, temporarily affixed to a bus shelter at 13th and Market Streets. It offended city officials' sensibilities.

Too lurid for Murder City?

In the 49 days since I wrote about a graphic designer's quest to plaster provocative antiviolence posters on bus shelters in Philadelphia, 58 more people have been killed.

Folks are being blown away at a rate of more than one a day. That stat alone should have city officials welcoming any help they can get.

Instead, the paid public service announcement was rejected. The gun in Frank Baseman's design scared someone in City Hall.

Baseman lives in Jenkintown, so he can be forgiven for not expecting something this ludicrous might happen. Good deeds rarely go unpunished



Monica
Yant
Kinney

in this town.

But even I was surprised by the decision to censor a pacifist who donated his time — and inspired others to give money — to get people thinking, not shooting.

Especially since there are two similar campaigns gracing storefronts and

SEPTA buses right now.

One ad targeting illegal weapons features a little girl, a gun, and a price tag. In the Mayor Street-endorsed "Put It Down" campaign, a gun pierces a red heart splattering black blood.

Why is Baseman's poster any more alarming than that, I asked city Public Property Commissioner Joan Schlotterbeck.

Because she said so.

Honoring the dead

Baseman, 48, was inspired to do his part with art after reading one too many "city man killed" stories.

See **POSTER** on B6

Commentary By Monica Yant Kinney

An image too lurid for Murder City?

POSTER from B1

The graphic designer, who teaches at Philadelphia University, envisioned a paper version of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Instead of war casualties, his poster honors the 406 homicide victims of 2006.

The names of the dead scroll across a blood-red canvas, between a question ("City of Brotherly Love?") and a command ("Stop the Violence!").

As the focal point, Baseman positioned an intentionally "menacing" 9mm brought to the photo shoot by a homicide detective.

"I wanted a gun bad guys would use," he said. "At 4-foot-by-6-foot, that gun is going to be huge."

(See the accompanying photo by Baseman's friend Todd Vachon, taken on the fly last week at 13th and Market Streets, for an idea of what the poster would have looked like.)

To Baseman, the gun is the story.

Last year's homicide-by-firearm rate was 85 percent. This year, it's approaching 90 percent.

Inquirer readers agreed with Baseman, donating money and printing services to the Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia to produce small and large versions of the poster and pay installation fees.

Ian MacFarlane, who owns Cafe Bravo at the Bourse, sent \$1,000.

"I have three teenagers. We live behind a six-foot fence in Germantown. I'm concerned," he told me.

"The violence has reached a point of absurdity. Maybe there's no solution, but maybe one less person is killed because of my money."

Staring down the barrel

Supporters donated enough to hang four posters for one month. But even that is not to be.

"When I saw it," Schlotterbeck said, "I wondered what

children would think sitting at a bus stop, staring down the barrel."

For a second opinion, Schlotterbeck called Deputy Police Commissioner Jack Gattens.

"There are a lot of emotions when a cop looks down the barrel of a gun," he told me, "and none of them are good."

Gattens didn't like the list of victims' names ("exploitative") or Baseman's use of red.

"It's not a peaceful color," the police official said.

Gattens even took offense to Baseman's putting a question mark at the end of *City of Brotherly Love*.

"Is he taking a shot at what we call ourselves?"

Well, yes, I muster. The issue is Philadelphians killing each other.

When I asked Gattens his opinion of the other antiviolence campaigns, he said both send clearer messages — though, admittedly, the "bloody mist" on the "Put it

Down" posters is "a little tacky."

Later, I relayed the reviews to Baseman, who is both disappointed and disgusted by the soap opera.

Has everyone forgotten that it's homicide we're talking about?

"Looking down the barrel of a gun is intimidating," he said. "It's not pretty. That's the intention."

And with the death toll already at 264 in August, "can there really be too many antiviolence messages out there?"

Contact Monica Yant Kinney at myant@phillynews.com or 215-854-4670. Read her recent work at <http://go.philly.com/yantkinney>

For a smaller version of the poster or free services for families of homicide victims, contact the Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia at 215-567-6776 or www.avpphila.org.